STATE ASSESSMENT OF FOREST RESOURCES (SAFR) MEETING
Friday, November 21, 2008
Idaho Department of Lands Office
3780 Industrial Avenue S., Coeur d'Alene
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
FINAL MINUTES

Welcome & Introductions – Mary Fritz, IDL

Mary Fritz welcomed participants and reviewed the purpose of the meeting: "To introduce the Idaho State Assessment of Forest Resources (SAFR) to stakeholders and share a proposed cooperative approach to developing the SAFR." Introductions were made.

Mary shared meeting goals:
1. Understanding Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources
2. Why Participation is Beneficial to Your Organization
3. Consideration Process
4. Discuss Issues/Data
5. Involvement: Who/How?
6. Level of Involvement
7. Identify Next Step

Forest Service State & Private Forestry Redesign – Craig Foss, IDL, & Scott Bell, USFS

Craig Foss began his review of state and private forestry by asking two questions:
1. What is state and private forestry?
2. What is redesign?

Craig described the current IDL programs, including urban forestry, forest stewardship, forest health, fire programs, conservation education, and the Forest Legacy program. He went on to explain how the longstanding concept of "stovepipe" programs needed to change in order to redesign our programs and processes from one of separateness into one of interconnectedness. Congress has asked for greater cooperation, and that request has led to the "Redesign of State and Private Forestry Programs" with a focus on collaborating and working toward common goals.

Three national themes have been identified:
1. Conserve working forested landscapes
2. Protect forests from harm
3. Enhance benefit from trees and forests

Basically, Redesign will allow entities to bring their experiences together and engage in the process of identifying priorities, combining efforts, and collectively, coming up with solutions. It will provide participants a narrative to promote program efforts to the legislature and congress.

What is the SAFR?—Margie Ewing, USFS

Margie Ewing began by stating that national guidance has been developed and that each state, to the extent possible, should try to incorporate the information within the guidance. This compliance of required data will allow program leaders to evaluate priorities, such as forest trends, conditions, and threats. The assessment sets the stage for states to identify complete "State Response Plans."

What is the State Forest Resource Strategy/Response Plan?—Scott Bell

Scott Bell discussed the statewide assessments and resource plans as legislated in the Farm Bill, which states that each state must comply by:
1. addressing threats, and
2. providing a description of resources necessary to address a statewide strategy.

Additional direction came from Paul Reis (not in attendance):
1. Describe how the state will access competitive and/or noncompetitive funding to accomplish the State Forest Resource Strategy.
2. Describe how the state will accomplish goals (e.g., timeline, budget, identify partners, identify strategies for monitoring, etc.).

The benefits to creating a forest resource assessment and response plan are:
1. States will continue to get funding
2. States can leverage interests, funding, and cooperation to get more accomplished.
3. By joining forces, partners can reduce overlap and increase efficiency.

Group discussion then turned to geographical differences among states (e.g., plains, grasslands, grazing lands, rangelands, forests, etc.). The term "forest resource assessment" may not represent all land types; thus, clarifying the definition was important to the group. Craig Foss noted that it will be difficult to satisfy everyone, but coming to an agreement on key issues was important, and that focusing on one topic does not diminish the importance of other topics.

To address items that need further discussion, Mary Fritz made notes on poster paper entitled "Issue Bin."
1. What is a forest?
    a. Look at Legacy information

       b.   Review NW ReGAP 2/data by USGS/USFS
2.   What is a "working" forest?
       a.   Does working = functioning ecologically?
       b.   Does working = enhancing forest resource markets?
       c.   Does working = enhancing public benefit?
3.   What ownership priorities will be identified within the response strategy?

Why Are You Here? (Partner Approach)—Steve Kimball, ID Fire Plan Coordinator

Steve Kimball began by explaining that assessments were meant to be an integrative process and to deliver an integrated product. Participant involvement would reflect data across ownerships, from a collective perspective, and it would address the highest priorities for overall investment. When the data assessments are complete, all partners should be able to use the product for leverage in each agency's/organization's programs.

Questions/Discussion—Mary Fritz, & Group

Initial responses included:
1.   How to justify time/energy investment into this project/process
2.   How to use existing information
3.   How results might affect litigation issues
4.   How to enlist participation of other agencies

Craig Foss stated that the Western Forest Leadership Coalition may be able to provide funding to run models once the data is complete.

At 10:35 a.m., the group broke for the morning break, returning at 10:50 a.m.

SAFR: Discussion of Approach and Information Needs—Dave Stephenson

Dave Stephenson addressed issues of how to proceed with this project. He explained that the goal was to develop a replicable process so that the data will continue to be relevant as conditions change in Idaho. The data is meant to be dynamic.

Dave provided a PowerPoint presentation in which he stressed that the purpose of the assessment was to look at conditions and trends (SAFR_Stakeholder_Mtg.pptx). Goals included:
1.   Identify primary issues,
2.   Prioritize issues geographically across the state,
3.   Identify opportunities to address issues on a landscape scale through collaboration and partnerships.

The purpose of the assessment is NOT to develop policy, be prescriptive, be overly detailed, or to include all issues/priorities of our agencies/organizations.

It was noted that not everyone would agree on the issues and priorities—and that everyone would have to work through that for the purpose of consensus.

Dave offered further information regarding the process by reviewing the established timeline:

Action Item	Deadline
1. Identify issues	January 31. 2009
2. Determine best available datasets to inform issues	February 28, 2009
3. Decide on methodology and score/weight/blend	March 31, 2009
4. Obtain stakeholder feedback/refinement loop and produce final draft	April 30, 2009

Dave discussed a few of the key aspects for identifying issues:
1. Keep issues simple and broad
2. No ownership (statewide)
3. Focus on key issues
4. Define the intent/focus
5. Are regions different enough to warrant different issues (e.g., urban vs. rural)?
6. Establish how to get additional input from others (i.e., call on those with expertise).

The group then began listing starting point issues:

Threats	Benefits
lack of infrastructure/markets-- (commercial and ecosystem service markets)	economic potential
	bring people together
increased cost of litigation	huntable species
management	wildlife
disconnect of knowledge	sustainable communities
supply of wood fiber	hunt/gather—cultural values
inability to treat forests	
invasive species	
nature deficit syndrome	
reduction of historic ecosystems	
carbon in our atmosphere	
current economy	
subdivisions	

It was discussed that issues could be seen as a threat or a benefit depending on how the issue was worded (e.g., "lack of economic potential" vs. "presence of economic potential"). Also, some topics represent both a threat and a benefit, as in wildfire and wildlife (lack of huntable species). The group also identified the importance of consolidating topics in order to break out themes for the redesign efforts.

Kirk David pointed out that social licenses exist, and that sometimes scientific knowledge may be incompatible with a population's perceptions of what is right/wrong or good/bad. He also stated that the issue of "working forests" may be the key to keeping land as forests.

Kurt Mettler stated that "management practices" are also a key issue to consider.

Scott Bell noted that looking at values and risks may help identify priorities and methodologies.

Dave Stephenson stated that they needed to develop a core guidance team for this process, and that others would serve in advisory roles. Further discussion would follow.

At 11:45 a.m. the group broke for lunch (provided), returning at 12:35 p.m.

Mary Fritz welcomed everyone back to the meeting. Mary suspended the brainstorming session and opened the meeting to questions. The group discussed acquiring proprietary parcel boundary data for industrial private landowners. Dave Stephenson commented that the assessment would not be perfect because proprietary and other desired information may not be available for the assessment. The assessment will drive a further look at areas that come up as priority areas.

SAFR: Discussion of Methodology – Dave Stephenson

Dave reviewed three different approaches to methodology for the state assessment. First, he explained the approach initially considered by the State of Montana which comprised various stakeholder/ownerships priority datasets combined into a single composite map. Where high priority areas on different ownerships were adjacent, that would indicate opportunities for collaborative projects. The upside to this approach is that various ownership priorities are shown on a single map. However, on the downside, it compares "apples to oranges" in terms of the different criteria used by landowners to define priority issues.

The second approach Dave described was the weighted overlay analysis used in Idaho's Forest Stewardship Spatial Analysis Project (SAP). Issues (threats and benefits) are displayed in individual datalayers where their presence is either in or out. Each datalayer is weighted according to importance on a percentage basis, with all layers totaling 100%. Those areas (30-meter pixels) that have the highest scores are the "high" priority areas.

The third approach Dave described was a variation of the weighted overlay called the matrix methodology. Issues are looked at in terms of whether they are a *threat* to the resource or a *benefit* to the resource. All threats are added together and all benefits are added together producing two maps with stratified high, medium and low areas. Then the two maps are combined together to produce a single map showing cumulative high, medium, or low priority areas. For example, an area that is both "high threat" and has "high benefits" would rank as the highest priority. In terms of where time will be spent doing competitive grants project work, it will occur in the higher priority areas.

Initially, IDL looked closely at adopting Montana's approach of a composite map of different landowner priority areas. However, by comparing the adjacency of the various ownership priorities, this would be a more prescriptive approach assuring that every stakeholder's issue/priority area was displayed. Montana has since decided against this approach and will follow the national guidance.

Dave thought that the weighted overlay is probably the most common methodology being used in assessments of this type, but not many states are very far along with their state assessments. Dave explained that with any of the methodologies described above there will be challenges. For example, how best to weight issues will vary from stakeholder to stakeholder.

Margie Ewing explained that State & Private Forestry has provided states with guidance as to what policy issues and objectives should be considered in the assessment, but not a specific methodology to be used. The statewide assessment is different from SAP where a weighted overlay methodology was used for the analysis.

Dave explained that IDL has limited use of GIS staff to produce the assessment datalayers, modeling, and subsequent maps.

Discussion by the group followed about the most useful methodology for the assessment. Mike DeArmond, BLM, thought the matrix methodology would be more helpful as it establishes a chronological order of the threats and benefits that lead to the strategy/response plan. Dave Stephenson reiterated the need for a core group to further develop the methodology for the assessment in more detail and then send it out for comment by the larger group. Kirk David (IFSAC) commented that decisions going into both the weighted analysis and matrix methodologies are subjective, but he thinks the matrix approach is most subjective. Dave commented that both approaches can be made more "complicated" in quantitative terms. The issues are the same in both the weighted analysis and matrix approach but how the issues are "blended" is different.

Tom Herron (IDEQ) commented he'd like a narrative aspect within the assessment that addresses issue prioritization, the strategy for selecting a specific methodology, how any subjectivity was dealt with, and interpretation of outcomes. Dave Stephenson confirmed that there will be discussion in the assessment report that explains how the methodology was developed, any scoring, etc. Steve Kimball added that the methodology report should explain the basis of why an issue scored high, medium, or low. Tom Herron suggested that it would be good to have a CD, DVD, or possibly a website available to exhibit the different coverages so they can be used by others.

Steve Kimball commented perhaps it would be helpful to use a couple of the assessment approaches to develop the response plan. Both the matrix and the Montana approach would provide value when considering priority issues, but also in terms of priority ownership areas. Mike DeArmond commented that using both of these two approaches would be problematic as it would result in a situation where, for example, multiple forests or BLM districts would use the results with perhaps completely different interpretations of the same data. Mike also commented on the difficulty of trying to use too much data in the analysis and subsequent problems with interpreting the output. Mike stressed the need to get a broad picture for the analysis and not incorporate data sets for every one of the 14 issue areas brainstormed earlier in this meeting.

Tom Herron noted that there have been integrated processes by federal resource management agencies that have produced some of the interpretive, combined outputs already. Discussion followed about using some of these existing efforts in the SAFR. Dave Stephenson commented that it's not the attempt of the assessment to create a lot of "new" data, but use the best available information or data.

Scott Bell commented that state priorities will become obvious when datasets are overlaid. It will provide an opportunity to discuss why a particular geographic area or location is a priority for multiple landowners/agencies and how to collaborate on project work. Bryan Helmich (IDFG) shared his experience of prioritizing agency issues and project areas; if there are too many issues, the analysis is too broad and unworkable.

The consensus of the group is to keep the assessment simple and drill down to specific areas in a more comprehensive manner for the response plan. Kirk discussed the suggested guidelines by S&PF's Appendix B. He suggested that the group use this list and add additional issues to the list that are unique to Idaho. Mike DeArmond suggested that a request for data layers be sent out to stakeholders to determine what is readily available that fit the guidelines.

Action Plan: Participation, Timeline, Next Steps – Steve Kimball

Steve Kimball and Dave Stephenson reviewed the timeline for work on the assessment. By the end of April 2009, datalayers will be obtained and the draft analysis (map) reviewed. Once reviewed, it will be ready for the report write-up.

Discussion followed regarding putting together a core group to further develop the methodology. The core group will be the guidance team for the assessment and will determine how to proceed on the methodology. This will be an interdisciplinary team that will keep in mind the end use when bringing together data layers. Time commitment for the core group will be 3-4 full day meetings and 3-4 telephone conferences. If anyone is unable to travel to Coeur d'Alene for a face-to-face meeting, IDL can utilize video conference capabilities through the IDL offices in Boise and Idaho Falls. Communication will also take place through emails.

Scott Bell suggested The Nature Conservancy as a key partner.

Core group members include IDL staff Dave Stephenson, Mary Fritz, Steve Kimball, Craig Glazier with IPNF, Mike DeArmond with BLM, and Kurt Mettler with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Bryan Helmich, IDFG, will check with his office to see who might be able to participate in the core group. Scott Bell will check with the USFS Region 4 office to see who is available to participate in the group. NRCS, Urban and TNC representation were suggested by the group. Dave Stephenson is lead contact for the core group – telephone (208) 666-8621, email dstephenson@idl.idaho.gov.

Further discussion followed about who else should participate in the assessment effort and not present for today's meeting. They include NRCS, the State Technical Committee, The Nature Conservancy, industrial landowners (Potlatch, Forest Capital, Stimson and others), Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Idaho Dept. of Water Resources, Resource Conservation & Development Program, Idaho Conservation League, Jay O'Laughlin (UI, Policy Analysis Group), and Ron Mahoney (UI Extension).

Discussion followed about range lands, rural, and urban landscapes and how to incorporate them into the assessment. It is the consensus of the group that these topics be included in the January discussion by the core group along with decisions about the analysis methodology. The plan for April, 2009, is for the larger stakeholder group to meet and discuss the chosen methodology and the resulting priority maps. Some stakeholders may be unable to attend in person due to travel restrictions, but may participate by video conference. Steve Kimball stressed that this will be an iterative process as the assessment develops over the next six months or so. Another topic for April meeting will be to identify a team of stakeholders to work on the response plan.

Discussion followed about a larger group of stakeholders that will need to be involved in providing feedback on the assessment. Scott Bell recommended the group look at developing a broader communications plan to disseminate information to groups such as the National Forests, private landowners, etc. This will be proactive communication so that groups know what the assessment is and how it will be used. It will be used to get buy-in with certain groups and help coordinate and leverage on-the-ground, collaborative project work. Other modes of communication were considered including web postings and web surveys. It will be important to have point persons for select groups. Margie Ewing explained that the National Forests will be receiving a letter from their Regional Forester directing them to support the state in the state's assessment and response plan.

Volunteers to participate on the communications team include Scott Bell, Craig Foss, and Andy Brunelle (USFS/Capitol liaison).

Group discussion continued regarding the baseline analysis of forest conditions, trends and threats on all ownerships in the state. The issues stakeholders identify and corresponding datasets plugged into the analysis will integrate baseline conditions. The core group will need to determine what information is needed to provide an understanding of present and future conditions, trends and threats.

The Group discussed additional opportunities to work together outside and beyond the SAFR and response plan. Tom Herron noted that the SAFR will be a good clearinghouse for the assessment but can keep the system "lubricated" for other efforts that all benefit from. Tom would like to see this group be open to working together in the future. A contact list will be distributed following the meeting for this purpose.

Dave Stephenson suggested the group reconvene three years out to assess where the assessment and response plan worked. Steve Kimball stressed the benefit of integrated thinking by stakeholders utilizing a larger Idaho view, as opposed to a narrow focused view of our individual interests. Craig Foss commented that during times of reduced budgets there is a benefit in terms of being able to focus EQIP funding in priority areas identified in the assessment.

Mary Fritz reviewed the meeting goals. The core guidance group will be contacted regarding the next SAFR meeting and all participants will receive meeting minutes.

Meeting adjourned 2:00 p.m.

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<center>List of Attendees</center>

Suzie Jude	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Scott Bell	USFS – State & Private Forestry
Ara Andrea	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Craig Foss	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Kirk David	Idaho Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee
David Stephenson	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Bryan Helmich	Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game
Mary Fritz	Idaho Dept. of Lands
John DeGroot	Nez Perce Tribe
Ed Warner	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Tom Herron	Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality
Rebecca Sorbel	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Craig Glazier	USFS – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Jeff Handel	Idaho Dept. of Parks & Recreation
Patrick Seymour	Idaho Dept. of Lands
David Groeschl	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Bob Helmer	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Kurt Mettler	Coeur d'Alene Tribe
Arlene Pence	Idaho Forest Owners Association
Doug Russell	Idaho Community Forestry Advisory Council
Margie Ewing	USFS – State & Private Forestry
Steve Kimball	Idaho Dept. of Lands
Mike DeArmond	DOI – Bureau of Land Management